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A hum- by any other name... trans/in/fusion and phonoaesthetics

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ABSTRACT:

What happens when the links between words make sound but not sense, but nevertheless a poetic world is built across the borderzones of these different linguistic and signifiatory origin points? What does this sort of etymological 'unmooring' show us about trans/in/fusion's way of thinking 'tradition as entanglement' (Ghosh 2021)? What can this tell us about the relationship between noise, crosscultural aesthetics, and the c.21st human, 'teetering on the brink' (Ghosh 2021) where normative modes of trans/lation do not operate? How, then does the production of reason operate, rootless? This essay takes a transinfusionist approach to the plastic, odic constructions of a specifically *lyric* mode of reason (see Yeung 2020), *humming along* with a Trans(in)fusionist mode of thinking, which this author hears as inherent in trans/languageing's sonorousnesses as well as in its fundamental nature and its performances of libidinal attachment. In order to do so, the essay reads by mobilizing and navigating a phonoaesthetic constellation of 3 'hum-'s: the *hum* of 'humming' noises (the quasi-mimetic German-indebted *hum*, which can be tuneful or otherwise; with a repertoire spanning the human, non-human, or inhuman), the 'hum' of the rising (lyric) bird (the Persian-indebted *huma*, akin to a phoenix), the 'hum' of the earth (the Greek-indebted *humus* – from *khamai*), to get to the idea of the hum of understanding, and its veil, or borderzone.

This is an essay, an attempt, a letter towards a possible understanding... This essay, attempt, letter, is built out of the present writer's occupation as poet, theorist, writer across borders, across languages, their paracoustic, trans-poetic, trans-languageing practise, and the resonance of this, and the collusion of its poetico-practical logic in destabilizing any direct linear singular linguistic positivism, the effects of a multi-linguistically trained literary ear and the problem of the deracinated translingual pun; 'what we inherit is not an inheritance but possessions in transit. What exist as our belongings remain forever in motion, apparently with us but fundamentally alien' (Ghosh 2021: 4). I write under the auspices of the sonorous momentum of meaning-making, with the idea of, as Ranjan Ghosh writes, the "deep down' syndrome where [the angular momentum of literature's matter and energy] unveils the gap and, hence, the *discontinuity in discrete allowable meaning-units*' (Ghosh 2021: 3, *itals. mine*), which produces a series of expressive phonoaesthetic possibilities. This is an extension of the plastic-eseplastastic co-respondance that Ghosh and myself have seen in the peculiarly plastic-aesthetico modes and resonances in c.21st thinking (see for instance Ghosh 2022 and Yeung 2020), in which we both foreground plasticity's translatability, its manoeuvrability, and its world making-breaking potentialities. We have both shared

a seat of this idea in polytemporal polylingual literary forms (or, to take Werner Hamacher's brilliant coinage, affirmations), forms which are haunted by a sound-world which is not as simple as the empirical processes of meaning and non-meaning, or developmental progression from babble to language (or, discrete languages), a poetological phonoaesthetic disruption of the Western academy's not-so-hidden principle of *translatio imperii*, which governs even its best comparative attempts.

So, reading *Trans(in)fusion*, I found myself asking, alongside Ghosh's own explorations here and elsewhere (for instance, his dialogue with Hillis Miller, and its almost Lucretian cascading effect of cross-border thinking and interfering inference), what are the noises that hum below the surface of language(s) eliciting ambiguities which are, howeversomuch repressed, nevertheless phonoaesthetically, their liquid concrete disanalogies, shape and haunt our reading practise; these soundmatters, *trompes d'oreille* (aka 'false friends'), blur meaning-making possibility before we institute again the veil of logic? This is a sound-worlding I have long been concerned, with, with the idea of a sort of *pathosformel* in sound; even in my poetry I am absolutely specific about the sonorous weirdness of translinguistic punning, particularly into and out of representation in an alphetabized script: that one can hold, for instance the ma of 媽媽 (Cantonese for mother) and maa (Orkney for seagull) simultaneously in the mind and mouth, and without omitting, even, other forms of 'ma'-noise (Yeung 2021). This is an essay which, then, moves on from, or prior to, my 'ma'-experiments, takes as its provocation an odd non-linguistic proto-universal, or aggravating companion, the hum. And, humming along with Ghosh's *Trans(in)fusion*, looks at the migrant potentiality of sound when it meets a critical poiesis; the 'stochastic possibility of apparent incommensurability' (Ghosh 2021: 20). We navigate this world of 'migrant particles' (Ghosh 2021: 10) hummingly, build a different logic through the borderzone before language when the racinations and ratiocinations of philologics meets the rhythmicities meets the phonics of the hum and what the hum/ in turn, meets.

One precisely does not open one's mouth to hum, one breathes deeply through one's nose, and then allows the vibration to move closed lips, the sound to pass through. It feels as if the sound passes through not only the front of the mouth but the throat; the skin, enclosing the hum, is vibratory, and is an organ (due to the nature of the nose, the mouth and the throat) which is both internal and external, related to more than one organ at once (labial-nasal). The hum is a consonantal noise incognate yet associated with the *mmhm* of approbation; it is *consonant* – sound which notionally needs a vowel-sound to animate it into language, or, sound which sounds alongside,

hums along in the background, a companion-piece to language – as well as clearly containing the difficult rough-aspirate, anomalous *h*. It's a noise not unrelated to various that we associate with the sound of the fast movement of an insect's or bird's wings – a noise which is a sign of life made exterior to the body and unrelated to communication. Its lack of sibilance makes it problematic. And so it seems logical that the 'hum' sticks in the throat, it does and does not use the voice, the voice being completed in the mouth, chambered and moved, the tongue – articulate – forcing space(s) into meaning-making sounds, bringing fore the possibility of a diversity of sound-imitations, perhaps mimetic, and always – notably without onomatopoeic overtones – anthropomorphic and anthropomorphic-reversals (whether zoomorphic, biomorphic, technomorphic, etc) in some way. It 'is as-if-to-speak, but not to speak [...and] disciplines language inn a transformative reversal' (Fathi/Hume: np). The hum allows us to bring incongruities apparently congruously together (it *is* the symptom of an outside-inside space); to hum at times – providing a background noise or sonorous counterpoint – might allow us to think. At the site of the hum, then, a common problem, a poetic problem, which is also a problem of migrant thinking, thus a trans(in)fusionist problem.

The logic of this essay interweaves the associative sonorous poetic meaning-making and *shaping* nature of phonoaesthetics, as well as the 'expressive qualities of sound' (Crystal: 8) with the odd aesthetic-compulsive idea of 'humming along' to, or in counterpoint with, a ready-made tune (in this case, this essay's readymade is Ghosh's trans(in)fusionist method), to claim the 'hum' as an estrang(ing)-making, open form (whereas Suk-Jin Kim, also productively estranging the performative hum looks at the morphology of the humming body and sees this as an invasive inwardness, a physiological foreclosure), and to do so indeed attempts to address the 'hum' itself, in four particular forms which demonstrate an integrated practise of humming world-making, which nevertheless are deracinated from each other (although they are sonorously and alphabetically analogous in English they are nevertheless not etymologically linked). We first hum/, we then seek the myth of the hum in the hum/a, moving through myth a little more down-to-earth (hum/us; hum/i/lis), and finally, *a bocca chiusa*, to consider the (un)veil(ing) of the matter in question of the hum. The hum, the hmmm, the um, does and does not use language, language, too, being completed in the moving chamber of the throat and mouth's articulate space – an ultimate form of mimesis internal to the human species – so how do we, can we, begin with the hum, the hum that means I can make sound-worlds in any of the languages

I have spoken, speak or try to speak, the hum... can we make the hap(penstance) of the hum(ming act) the groundswell of a move of translanguaging, of trans(in)fusion? What happens when we lean into rather than smooth out the 'trans-force of errancy' (Ghosh 2021: 86) which underpins the poetological, the affirmative, in language? What do these associated moves tell us? This, then, is a conversational experiment in hums.

(1) Hum/

'But there was also', thinks Beckett's Moran in the Englished version of *Molloy*, 'the question of the hum, so various in tone in the vicinity of the hive that this could hardly be an effect of chance' (Beckett 2009b: 177). The hum forces speculation, questioning. Its insistence and variety demands such sub-atomic or non-linguistic attention, demands a different sort of method of specificity (other than the visuocentric or, indeed, the anthropomorphic) to dwell on it further as phonic phenomenon. The hum comes before and after the symbolic dimension of the dance of the bees, before the dual of the novel (Moran/Molloy) becomes distinct or even eruptively fatal within itself (although after the cut of the novel into two sections); each figure (or bee) is not differentiated by a hum individual to it, rather the hum dis-figures, trans-figures, even the idea of a singular bee, is the figuration of a different formalism entirely, neither anti nor purely monadic. It is at once each figure of a bee, as well as (commingled) the hive, distinct from the visibly physical it nevertheless, on its terms, operates sonorously in opposition to dissociation, in collusion with the sono-linguistic excesses that Moran's empiricism seeks to ignore or debunk. And yet the hum, here, is incessant, invasive, remembered. Moran contemplates, 'The purpose of the hum is not to emphasize the dance but on the contrary to vary it. And the same figure exactly differs in meaning according to the hum that goes with it' (Beckett 2009b: 177); the hum is there; the hum comes second.

Indeed, this Beckettian hum, or *the* Beckettian hum, is a second-order formulation. It must needs equal always to two, with a first which is invisibilized; it is second, but that upon which the possibility of any first is predicated; it is a simultaneity, but without clear evidence of a ground. It is therefore a trans(in)fusion – a bifold movement through membranous structures – par excellence. It is second-order, of course, in a number of ways. Firstly, it is second order, making the bee-ness of the hive essential to Moran's investigation-observations (after the dance (visual) comes the hum (aural) which nevertheless is observable before the dance). Secondly,

it occurs in the second part of *Molloy*, an addendum, however much it runs across a number of pages, to the stone-sucking Molloy's observation of a 'buzz' cognate with the 'pain' of 'sound' (Beckett 2009b: 49); both aspects chime with the overall asphyxiating progress of the novel. The hum/ (second distinction mark 2.5) is distinctly (phonologically) *not* a buzz. Thirdly, the 'hum' itself is an Englishing of the original French observations of the (French) Moran, where this not-hum/ is a 'bourdonnement'; distinct from a 'vrombissement' or 'ronnement' (Beckett 1951: 293); the choice to translate this into 'hum' rather than to 'buzz' (or any other associated sound) is significant, or, 'could hardly be an effect of chance' (Beckett 2009b: 177) – it calls to a history and philosophy of bees, bee-translations, bee-observations and bee-effects two centuries longer than that of the 'buzz' (OED 2022a), but which are nevertheless intimately connected to, first of all, the figure(s) of the bee(s) (c.15th), then bells (c.16th), then the passages of rumour as well as the low (human) tone of dissent, approbation, and/or song (c.17th), the sound of industry (c.19th) and technology (c.20th) (OED 2022b) – it is resonant. Resonant, too is the lyric tinnitus or tintinnabulousness of both English and French 'hum's (*bourdonnements d'oreilles*).

Where, then, might we move towards as we re-situate this mode of humming, at once bee-born and associatively disassociated? We can situate this, for now, at a certain sort of birth of the musical, or phonoaesthetic, quality of the poetic imaginary.

As a child, mute, Orpheus knew it all without knowing it, or at the least without being able to say it. And, under the direction of these women he sought, before entering into language, little by little, to listen, in silence...

...his own body, the horse noises of his larynx, the beating of his heart, the rhythm and tempo of his pulse, of his breathing, as well as the tinnitus [acouphènes], the humming [bourdonnements] and senseless ringing [tintements] of the ear; he knew already how to listen to the sobs of desire, the desert of love; he learned to hear, all around, the moans of a mother in need, the cry of the new-born...

...the first lament of a species.

His skin opened to the imbecile buzzing [vrombissement] of the cities, the chaos of battle...

[...] He listened, in short, to me, their bodies and assemblages, the murmur and tumult which, without end, before history, without a doubt insensible. (Serres, 2011: 2 my trans.)

The hum, somehow, follows the narrative of development (or, within Serres's earlier formulation, the essential background hum of the world ['bruit de fond' (Serres 1972:

189)]; for more on Serres and noise via Ghosh see Ghosh 2021: 65-6). Yet this is not a proto- or pre-evolutionary atomistic formulation. Rather, it is an un-wor(l)ding, an apoietics, whose observation leads to the affirmative of poietic understanding – what lies behind the production of sensible hearing (see Hamacher 1996: 1-9).

To come full-circle in this humming genesis (or active self-differentiation towards oblivion), we can take three paths: the first, toward the trans(in)fusional moment of the initial infantile apperception of this Serresian ‘hum of the world’ and its foundation in the or every sensate body’s ‘skin-ego’ (Anzieu 2016), the body as tympanum. The second, back to Beckett, adducing that these ‘hums’, the irresistible pun of the hums of bee-ing, are an essential move in Beckett’s own hum/orous phonoaesthesia. Rarely are there hums (in spite of the other many-tonal noisiness of the works) outside of *performed* Beckett. And yet these rare hums (bourdonnements) undergird the project towards a ‘Literatur des Unworts’ (‘literature of the un-word’) (Beckett 2009a: 516/520), the problem ‘arbitrary materiality’ (Beckett 2009a: 517) and of Orphic aesthetic-integration or ‘absolute predicament’ (Beckett 1938: 289) of the coming-into-voice of the inside+outside of the figure, which must be gotten to by ‘tearing apart’ the ‘veil’ of language (Beckett 2009a: 518); the veil (we will later follow the hum/ here) becomes the hum/ which *is* the sonic figuration and poetic act of the inside+outside. Edgy, the absence of a hum, of course, signifies dull matter, or death (Moran returns to a non-humming hive to find, endarkened, a handful of dead bees, dust-like; this is very close to the novel’s ending), but at the same time the brutish indifferent hum may well be a hum of non-life (the bell, the technological, the electric hum). The fourth, to look at the dawn and dusk of the hum/, its interactions with sorts of ‘enchanted’ worldings (note the relation of the hum as ‘ground’ for hum/us), its unconscious resonances, or relation to sleep and waking (real and figurative), to liminal states. The figures of the dawn and dusk of the hum allows us to listening to where or how it extends, transculturally within our phonoaesthetic poietic modus. It is with/in ‘poeien’, after all, is where, con-figured, extremes may meet (Schestag: 32).

(2) Hum/a

Placing the ‘alpha’ or ‘aleph’ or beginning-letter on the hum, we conjure a bird (هما); in so doing we conjure a variant series of mythologies which converge in the symbolization of the act of beyond-human understanding, the potential of poiesis. The hum/ of the huma is a ‘blithe spirit’ (Shelley: 463), birdingly-unbirded, unearthed, and expository of the failure of (human) language; the huma, too, is seen in Sufi

mysticism as a combination of spirit and water, as an impossible bird which nevertheless whose shadowy passing grants a form of enlightenment, but for those who capture or kill it, grants rather death. And so with this hum/, language, even before its outset, fails. And yet the figure of the bird and the figure of the poet are transculturally entwined. The hum/ of the huma is collected (transculturated) into dictionary English from Persian in the c.19th, and so the ranks of literary blithe-spirits grow. Its equation with the phoenix brings us pre-emptively to the world-making aspects of the hum with the allegorical spirit-birds of the Gnostic *Origin of the World* who, tripartite, signify immortality (spirit), longevity (fire), and textuality (water). And so what of the language of failure, or failed sonorousness, of the violent associative poetic acts, of this hum? We come back, in a sense, to two of our already accreted resonances: the hum/our and hum/anity of and in the hum/. Neither comedy, nor mankind, are not violent in their development, particularly when such orphic principles as above are applied. An auricular tinnitus can be mistaken for a cardiological venomous hum. A hum a technological death-rattle. The rattle what is held by the childish fool to signify the commencement of the play; the fool who twists language; the trans-languaging expressions which display the violence of false roots, or deraciations; the fool of the rampant libido whose presence brings us down to earth with a bump. The opposite, and yet the same, as the spirit-bird.

Through the admixture of bird and fool, we encounter another infamous hum, another infamous exercise in the difficult humour of the hum's power to take us into (or out of) the world; its otherworldiness; its relation to the developmental. On the stage, a prince, currently asleep, has entered into an unrecognisable world. But we are not interested in the prince, rather, in the odd figure that enters with a large birdcage strapped to his back, in which are various birds, who, singing, holds panpipe in his hand, which he occasionally plays. He introduces himself by his *métier*, although in so doing he proclaims that he is already known:

Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja,
Stets lustig, heissa! hopsasa!
Der Vogelfänger ist bekannt

Bey Alt und Jung im ganzen Land. (Mozart/Schikaneder: 68)

This is the world, we know, of Mozart/Schikaneder's *Zauberflöte*, or Magic Flute, and this Hanswurst-like figure, linguistic composite of the human fool and the parrot ('Papagei'; think perhaps, hummingly, too to the non-sensible parrot of *Malone Dies*, link back to Moran's birds, thence, bees), is Papageno; the role tailored to the skills of

the Bavarian performer-librettist Emanuel Schikaneder ('more actor than singer' (Swafford: 705)), and who tells us something about Mozart's peasant economies of lyric. The approbative gestures, the nonsense words, the world-knowing gestures tell us that this bird-catcher, no effete Romantic, is down-to-earth, naïve in his claims, a loyal coward, lusty in his desires, a bit of a liar, un-worldly. His is a world of matter, where metaphysics matter to him not one whit. And it is at this juncture that the hum/ happens. Papageno speaks too much, claims too much, and understands too little. Doubled by the double-reeded buzz of the bassoon, the baritone Papageno, a padlock on his mouth, is forced to hum: 'hm! hm!' etc ((Mozart/Schikaneder: 89). The humming is a lesson (Papageno may cease to have to hum if he ceases to lie), which is also a lesson about love (as Papageno hums alongside, Tamino and the Three Ladies of the Queen of the Night moralize about the impossibility of love with lying; of course, as Papageno hums, we do not know if he agrees or not, or even cares). The implication, in the counterpoint of humming and singing in words, is that to be placed in a state of humming is to be locked out of enunciation, so, conversation, knowledge, enlightenment. Yet much of the comedy of this aria lies in Papageno's nevertheless being able to communicate – through humming, through gesture (sometimes generous, sometimes obscene) – which more often than not also breaks the fourth wall or 'veil' of the stage (he is often played as buffonishly reaching out to the audience), and allows for smugness as much as desperation in the performance. The hum bridges worlds.

The hum, here, of the bird-man, is also an assimilative hum. Hanswurst-like this character has basic needs (as Swafford writes: All he wants out of life is food, wine, song, and a pretty little wife with whom to make babies. Part of his simplicity is that simple vision of love founded on an earthy sexuality' (Swafford: 705)). Even the lock on his mouth cannot stop him bothering others or seeming self-satisfied when the bothering allows for successes in terms of his wants. In this sense, Papageno's hums are cognate with a signalling of infantile "oral satisfaction" (Connor: 72), the mouth full of milk at the mother's breast, which, cognate with the physical desires of the character, demonstrate at once his lack of integration with the new (Enlightenment) or old (Ancien) régimes that the opera opposes in the aristocratic plot, and yet also exposes how the humming of the drives haunt both – how do we not equate the opera's doublings (Papageno/Papagena; Tamino/Pamina; Sarastro/Queen of the Night; Three Boys/Three Ladies, and so on) quite simply with a suite of drives for which the hum is a basis, showing gesture (or communication) more than and less

than speech: “The assimilative mm is the way in which speech assimilates itself to, and assimilates it to itself, not-speech.’ (Connor: 72). Sure, the vulgarity of Papageno’s hum is an annoyance, but it is nevertheless the ground for what it is not (whether this is the ‘blithe spirit’ of lyric birdsong, the desperately apostrophic ‘ah’ of the Queen of the Night’s aria, the articulately tuneful speech-acts and revelations of Tamino-Pamina’s *lumen gratiae et fidei* (which, incidentally, are hum/a related inasmuch as their trials by silence/spirit, fire, and water, mirror the Gnostic symbolism of the bird), or Papageno’s *lumen naturale* the response to which (‘pa pa pa...’) is also Papageno’s final development, or moment of eventual self-recognition), and is the dramatization of an *active unsaying*, or unwor(l)ding; poeisis’ childish mode of a ‘violence or violent desire to outdo, undo poetry – the violence of linguistic fabrication – and reach poetry – violence done to this violence from within, in order to undo linguistic violence...’ (Schestag: 32).

(3) Hum/us

The ‘hum’ of (or in) the Earth is one etymologically unracinated from that of the ‘hum’ as sound and the ‘hum’ as bird, and yet the ‘hum’ phonaesthetically brings all three together, providing (and we see this already in the configuring of Papageno’s ‘bringing down to earth’ humming-punishment) internal poetic logic to any ‘hum’ beyond its astringently philological cognates, showing, continually, the ways in which alternative forms of reason, constellated, can produce the effect of visibilizing the often invisible migrant, trans(in)fusing, of poetic thought. For sure, this is also a so-called reasonable violence. But what is more violent than Western poetry’s own too-often repeated imperial claim to ‘worlding’, and its ‘grounding’ in a certain suite of pre-ordained linguistic roots, its fabrications? The ‘hum’ of ‘humus’, is quite literally a bringing of earth (from *khamai* - χᾶμαί), a fall, or grounding, even internment (a related derivative from a prior root may be *khthon* - χθών); stochastic. Here, we could return very well to the silent dust of Moran’s dead bees, or to the failed chthonic quest of Orpheus, and posit an anti-Gaian move in the un-wording poetics of the hum, or we could address the West-East song-symphony integrative translation-acts of Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, its endarkening, intoxicated poetics of exhaustion and radical expansion of the original Chinese poetry. With such an un-wording comes, though, a humming genesis, a making palpable of that which resists or falls outside of the world-making art of *translatio imperii*, what is occluded in the wrong-toned depth of feeling of ‘the gift outright’, or, the challenge to ‘fixity’ (Ghosh 2021: 12)

With the concept of the 'hum' of the earth we encounter an ironical etymological opposition: whereas such a hum signifies life or (should we also incorporate technological-electric hums) the energy of being, the hum/ (via khthon, thus under- or other-worldly) of humus is radically differentiated from ge (γῆ), or, the living earth (from whence, of course, the much romanticized Gaea). The hum/ is violently broken from itself in itself; life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness both, and both differently. We take for granted *humus*, de/re-generate, and yet... Thus the throwaway comedy of the end of the earth, and the (non-beginning and end of) hearing and humming along to the earth's and the human figure's interred hum:

HAMM: Look at the earth.

CLOV: Again!

HAMM: Since it's calling to you.

CLOV: Is your throat sore? (*Pause.*) Would you like a lozenge? (*Pause.*) No.

(*Pause.*) Pity.

(*Clov goes, humming, towards window right, halts before it, looks up at it.*)

HAMM: Don't sing.

CLOV (*turning towards Hamm*): One hasn't the right to sing any more?

HAMM: No.

CLOV: Then how can it end?

HAMM: You want it to end?

CLOV: I want to sing.

HAMM: I can't prevent you.

(*Pause. Clov turns towards window right.*) (Beckett 2009c: 43)

There is something denatured, or un-natured, about this hum, and its denial in occurrence as reaction to ill health and possible salve (lozenge), the hum's wrongheaded un-definition as song, its directive bracketedness. Clov, just for a moment, hums along with (alongside) the hum of humus, or, the problem of the earth, moves away from and turns toward Hamm (the hum, denatured), wishes (and fails) to sing; 'epochic' and 'ataraxic' (Ghosh 2021: 23) simultaneously. This is the chthonic side of the hum, the eruption of the possibility of the un-wor(l)d and its un-silence.

But of the world which hums with life ('ge') and yet simultaneously dispossesses ('khamai'), we might turn to a different figurative staging of the hum of the earth and its ensorcellement: Shakespeare's humming island of the *Tempest*. Gonzalo describes his waking under threat:

Upon mine honour, sir, I heard a humming,

And that a strange one too, which did awake me.
I shaked you, sir, and cried. As mine eyes opened,
I saw their weapons drawn. There was a noise,
That's verily. (Shakespeare 2011: 228 (2.1.318-322))

The senses, under the influence of the hum (apparently a distant-hearing of the song of Ariel – the opposite of Clov's humming inability to sing here there is a humful inability to hear song), are disordered: awake first without eyesight, Gonzalo first moves, then enunciates. Only then is the visual possible. The hum (soon, then re-defined as 'noise' and thus distanced) acts on the body, its strangeness estranges, unroots the imperium of the (soldier's) trained sense-world: these are no interjective 'hums and has' (Shakespeare 2013: (5.4.23)) nor murmuringly dissatisfied 'petty' 'hum or ha' (Shakespeare 2010: 191 (2.1.71)). This 'strange' 'humming' is a phenomenon whose existence must be sworn to on the basis of the 'honour' of a different world (that of the debasing phonic logic of the 'hum and ha'). But the humming of this new world makes sense without sense; it time is that of dawning (waking) which nevertheless (in the case of Gonzalo at least) is first worrying, then systematised (as much as possible) and then (as much as possible) consigned to Lethe.

Of course the *Tempest's* time of humming not only one of waking into an alternate logic (and the rejection of the logic thus presented), is also that of twilight (sleeping). Caliban and Stephano, having assured each other that they are not as monstrous or strange as they have seemed on first encounter, converse (Stephano with imperial ambitions, Caliban with the arrogance of the native), and Caliban, famously, characterises the islands instrumental hums:

Be not afeared. This isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
The clouds, methought, would open and show richness
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again. (Shakespeare 2011: 254 (3,2,135-143))

The humming of the island, then, is that of the voice made strange, of multiple voices, which, dependent on perception can be euphonous or cacophonous (think of Molloy's buzz and Moran's hum; Hamm's song and Clov's hum) – a new or foreign, language which is at once human and not, and mediated, technological (instrumental). The

hums of the island (the hums of the earth) here are, waking and sleeping, of a migrant order, that miscellaneous effect the body into motion, the ear into hearing, the mind into consciousness and unconsciousness, toward the dreamed (Caliban) or the real (Gonzalo), a fight (Gonzalo) and flight (Caliban), intuitive (Caliban) and systematizing (Gonzalo) response. The hum/us hum and the reactions and interpretations of this hum are where we might see where the dice fall in terms of the worlding effects of the *translatio imperii*; such sound shapes the start and end of world, is, a darkling form of *genius locus*, forms, then, possibilities and destabilizations of locale. And in such a hum, hums also the Norse and Icelandic twilight – the resonance of ‘dark air’.

(4) *a bocca chiusa*

The hum – a way of navigating the migrant art of ‘unsaying the said’ (Ghosh 2021: 11), and in many ways of unseeing the seen, an exposition, to, of a medium way to navigate the violent difficulties of problems of radical otherness. The hum, ineradicable, nevertheless sounds out its own deracinations, it is the hum of the twilight zone, the borderland or disembodied area of space and time where indifferences are made obvious, as are oblivions, which too often is seen as (romantically) veiled and also beyond the ‘veil of logic’. Acousmatic, in the process of the phonoaesthetics of humming, there is no veil (or, the hum in itself is the veil), no active differentiation on the basis of language-identity. To hum is to not speak. To hear humming is to attend to that which is not speech (or song, or otherwise directive), that which connects or resonates. To hum along is to allow for other logics to present themselves, to hear, or read, in counterpoint, to integrate inside and out, ‘false’ and ‘true’ friends, ‘verily’ into a poetics which, capacious, is a trans(in)fusive practise. And there is no humbling giveaway of accent - we, quite precisely, do not even have to open our mouths to speak and yet the hum infiltrates.

Caliban’s is not the only overnight vigil saturated with mis-translation, translanguaging, hope, humming, and its difficult acousmatics. Still on the stage, Cio-Cio-San (‘Butterfly’) with her son and servant sleeping beside her, waits silently for the anticipated return of Pinkerton. Night falls. We are between cross-cultural misunderstandings, and between Act 2 and Act 3 of the later version of Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. The curtain does not fall between the acts, although the theatre lights may dim. There is no intermission, no veil, nothing is cut off but something new is exposed. Instruments drone and pluck from the pit below and off-stage hums the

infamous *coro a bocca chiusa* which nevertheless draws the attention completely to the stage. The hum is atmosphere, is understatement of understanding enveloping both stage and operahouse; it is unclear from whence it emanates, whether it comes from or envelopes those bodies that are waiting, how the relation shifts between the characters of the opera (waiting) and the audience (waiting), and their unshared attention and intent (the odd logic of false friends, again) towards the nothing which is hummily performed. As the humming fades, repeating its theme in fragments, the morning light appears, and the action of the opera takes hold again. But it is that *coro a bocca chiusa* which one hears displaced snatches of from all sides, fleetingly, deracinated from their source-body (the humming person; the opera itself), after the opera ends and one re-enters the threshold of the atrium of the house. A self-estranged hum-commons of phonoaesthetic trans(in)fusion paracoustic to the rest of the buzz or hubbub; con/sonant, in motion, a/part.

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